



Wilderness camp participant tries to start a fire without matches

Parents Use Wilderness Programs as Last Resort

By Carol Sisco
DHS Public Information

Wilderness youth programs are often seen as a last resort by parents of defiant, rebellious and out-of-control teenagers. Kids who wind up in the privately-owned programs have usually gone through all the usual treatment routines: working with school counselors, therapy, sometimes staying in residential treatment programs.

Utah has a long history with the camps. Utah became one of the first states to license them in 1990 and is finalizing even more stringent program requirements.

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Some Teens Make Big Changes in Wilderness Camps

By Carol Sisco
DHS Public Information

BEAVER COUNTY - Scott, 17, had a choice. The Kansas City resident picked a desolate Utah wilderness camp in the Wah Wah Mountains over juvenile hall, figuring camp would be the easy way out. It wasn't.

Dressed in cutoff khakis and a once-white T-shirt, Scott talks while washing his hair from a canteen during a rare layover day at RedCliff Ascent Wilderness Program in South-Central Utah about one hour west of Cedar City.

"I learned it's hard work," he said. "Making fires takes so much patience."

Scott speaks the right words for eventual graduation from the state-licensed private program that his parents sent him to in desperation after repeated bouts of drinking and doing drugs.

"I did the three-peak hike and found if I try I can do whatever I want," he said. "I learned what meant a lot is my family. I was drinking and doing drugs at home. I didn't miss that. It's my family that's the most important thing."

He isn't bad at saying what he thinks you want to hear either and later admits he says "what people want to hear so I can get out sooner."

John, from Virginia, is more blunt.

"The worst thing is having to deal with other kids. I don't think I really learned anything in camp," he claims. "I was in jail. I plea-bargained to finish school and come here."

Greg, from New Jersey, is more reflective.

"I can't wait to see my parents. I learned a lot of skills, how to start fires, how to survive. You learn a lot about yourself," he said. "You learn what

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you can do. If you try hard, you can accomplish anything.”

Greg said he would look for a job when he got home and return to school as a junior or a senior, depending on how many credits he had. As the mail arrives, he pulls away, tears up as he reads a letter from home and walks a little to regain his composure.

RedCliff accepts boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 17. While they’re licensed for 82 teens, they usually work with about 40 in small groups of five or six. The kids live in the wilderness, hiking from site to site daily, studying when they stop and receiving weekly visits from a traveling therapist.

Early wilderness camps were based on deprivation theories where kids lost privileges if they acted out. It’s different at RedCliff where incentives are added for performing well. Teens who complete their study projects get extras like peanut butter, candy, spaghetti or spices, student services director Josh Mendenhall said.

Everyone receives the basics like rice, lentils, oats, cream of wheat, frozen dehydrated beans and trail mix. Food drops add fruits, vegetables and meat. The teens carry their own grains, water, clothing and bedrolls in backpacks.

“You hear lots of opposing ideas about what we do,” Mendenhall said. “That we’re a stalag in the desert that abuses kids. Others say we’re boarding kids who are a menace to society who would go out and rape and pillage.”

Misperceptions abound, according to Dr. Dan Sanderson, the clinical director.

“The kids are good for the most part,” said Sanderson, known as Doc Dan. “Every young person could benefit from this rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. It’s exciting to see a dramatic change in a relatively short time here. We accomplish in a short time what takes a lot of years of therapy when they are outside and surrounded by their comfort zone.”

The program is adjusted to meet individual needs, Sanderson said. Each student has a different set of circumstances and problems. However, all

are good at avoiding the “business of life,” according to RedCliff’s Web site. Most expect everyone around them to compensate for their own lack of responsibility.

New participants tend to come in wearing a mask, Menhenhall explained. “It says I’m a cool kid, a rich kid, whatever. But they get worn down.”

“They’re trying to avoid reality,” Sanderson added. “But they come to some degree of resignation. At some point they decide they’re here and go into the program. I see wilderness as a psychological gym where you test out your game. It’s a matter of them learning ‘I have to take some control over my situation. I start building my identity based on my competencies.’”

The sites, located on Bureau of Land Management land, are nomadic. Campers stay close to a water source each night. On holdover days they get time to really clean up and see a therapist.

“Arriving here is a rude awakening,” Mendenhall said. “They wake up at 4 a.m. Some parents trick them. One girl thought the family was going to Disneyland. They were, but they stopped here first and left her.”

The girl, 15, slumped over in the office listening to CD’s on her headset. When they got to camp, the other kids were dirty and jumped into the pond. She suddenly realized they looked like kids who were in trouble. Then she knew why she was there.

When students arrive they’re outfitted with appropriate clothing and gear, told about program rules and expectations and taken to an acclimation group. They also have a physical exam before going to an existing camp.

Scott, John and Greg all had very different concerns. But as they planned for RedCliff’s quarterly Shindig – a gathering of all the camps – they worked as one rehearsing 80’s rock songs they would perform for everyone.



Licensing Director Ken Stettler at RedCliff

Dave Thomas Honored

By Terry Twitchell, Human Resources

Dave Thomas won platinum and gold Aurora Awards for Public Service Announcements (psa's) he wrote, produced, directed and shot for the Division of Aging and Adult Services. The spots, in English and Spanish, teach elderly people with limited incomes how to apply for Medicaid supplements.

Dave, at 6'4," is a little intimidating when you first meet him. He looks more like someone you used to know, maybe that kid who sat in the back row in school, than a film producer. But make no mistake; Dave is a film magician. He has been honored with more than 20 state and national awards for his videos, psa's and photographic work.

His anti-drinking and driving psa, "Graduation Party," aired nationally for three months during the holiday season. His anti-drug music video, "Choose to Refuse," which he wrote the music for, played on MTV for a year, and his "After 55: Still Alive" video, an exercise program for the elderly, aired on New York Public Television for two years.

Thomas' film, "I Can Do That," got a standing ovation at the 2002 Division of Services for People with Disabilities Conference.

"Dave was able to understand what we wanted to project. He saw our consumers as people first,

and was able to show their accomplishments and that their disabilities are only a part of who they are," said Sharon Yearsley of DSPD. "He is fabulous and the only person outside of the division to win our Second Miler Award."



Over his 30-year career, Thomas developed hundreds of training materials including videos, brochures, psa's and manuals. He worked with many film-challenged people who asked for miracles on a dollar budget and more times than not he pulled them off. He has worked through the night, weekends if necessary, and through family illnesses to get the job done.

Thomas is a great example of a dedicated state employee and has been recognized by the Utah Legislature and received the "Governor's Award for Excellence" four times, according to his boss John Mathews.

Thomas has a Masters Degree in public administration from Brigham Young University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Utah. He began his career with the state as a protective service worker but after becoming part of the training unit he used his experience at KUED to pioneer video instead of film in state training programs.

Wilderness...

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Last July licensing officials met with program providers to look at tightening up the regulations. Coincidentally, 14-year-old Ian August died at the Skyline Journey program two days earlier. Last Christmas Katie Lank, 16, lost her footing on a hike with Redrock Ranch Academy. She died 19 days later.

The state's regulations are aimed at making sure kids are safe. Staff qualifications, amounts of food and water needed daily, proper attire and sleeping gear, medical attention and safe hiking temperatures are included in current regulations.

Among the proposed changes are requirements to mark certain areas as off-limits because they are

too dangerous, lowering the temperatures at which it is safe to hike and requiring staff to demonstrate proficiency in 13 areas including emergency procedures and compass navigation. Now, staff take courses in those areas but aren't required to demonstrate proficiency.

Following August's July death, the state issued a revocation notice to Skyline Journey. The program has appealed.

Another program, High Peaks Wilderness, in the Uinta Basin had its license revoked for failing to provide hikers with proper equipment.

Nine wilderness programs are still licensed, including Skyline. Each one is independent, but they share many common philosophies and all must follow the same regulations.



From Robin's Pen Employee Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who responded to this year's employee survey. I am pleased that nearly 1800 of our 5200 employees completed the survey. A good share of you also took the time to convey your feelings, frustrations and suggestions in response to the open-ended questions. I've read every one of them, summarized major themes and reviewed them with Division and Office directors.

With respect to overall satisfaction, ratings were actually higher than I anticipated. It has been a very difficult year with budget reductions, no raises and increasing needs amongst those we serve. Overall, 79 percent of staff reported they were satisfied with their jobs – 41 percent reported strong satisfaction. Sixty-one percent agreed they were “as satisfied or more satisfied” than a year ago.

In conveying why you were more or less satisfied, here's what you told me. The top reasons why staff reported greater satisfaction were:

- Job progression and “fit” – including that the job was challenging, your knowledge and skills had grown, and for some, you mentioned that you had gotten promotions
- “Just like what I do” – including the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those we serve
- Having a supervisor who respects you, mentors you and listens to your input
- Co-worker attitude and performance – working as a team, caring about the individuals we serve, positive attitude

The top reason highlighted for why staff are not as satisfied was — you guessed it — Compensation including not getting raises this year, no cash bonuses or incentives and paying more for health insurance. Can't say I disagree. Many are angry and that anger is directed at Division Directors and me. That's part of our job.

For pieces of this, I actually have little control – Departments do not recommend salary issues to the Governor or Legislature so issues of COLAs and merit raises are truly not within our control. Other issues you raise are. For instance, freezing financial incentives and bonuses was a specific decision I made.

When faced with reducing the budget I have basically three choices – reduce administrative expenditures, reduce staff or reduce direct services to those we serve. I chose to take most of the first round of reductions out of administrative costs – in fact, most state offices and administrative budgets were reduced between 18 and 35 percent. A part of that was money we traditionally spent on incentives and bonuses across the Department. In FY2001 we spent in excess of \$1.5 million in this area. I could have reduced more staff or services by that much but I chose not to. I know many of you disagree with this decision. If and when budgets look better, we will revisit this issue. In the meantime, I am challenging all divisions and offices to implement nonmonetary employee-recognition efforts.

Other top factors leading to dissatisfaction were feeling that your input as staff is not listened to or valued and not having a supportive supervisor.

As I read your recommendations for improving client services, one really stuck in my mind. Several staff at the State Hospital said “we should treat our patients like they were members of our own family.” You're absolutely right. I hear those same sentiments throughout the department. I applaud them. We should treat all our clients and colleagues in the same manner that we or a member of our family would want to be treated.

Other frequently mentioned suggestions were:

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Scouts Gather Books for Youth Corrections Kids

By Jeanne Lund, Youth Corrections



Keith Johnson
photo, Ogden
Standard Examiner

Jill Merritt, volunteer coordinator for the Division of Youth Corrections, knows the value of appropriate books for youth in secure-care facilities. Not only do books help provide adolescents with a chance to improve their academic and literacy skills, established libraries help provide opportunities to learn skills such as organization, employment skills and how to

interact positively with others.

In an effort to enhance and establish a more extensive library system within DYC facilities located in Northern Utah, Merritt organized a book drive. The Ogden Standard Examiner donated space for small ads requesting book donations. Bradley Stoker, a 13-year-old Boy Scout, saw the ad and wanted to help. He and members of Troop 289 worked a full day sorting and placing 2,732 books in boxes for distribution.

When Bradley and Merritt first spoke, Bradley said, "I love books so much and I saw in the paper they were needed."

"Our books are old and damaged," Merritt told him. "We need to build and establish new libraries. Not every Youth Corrections program in the Northern area of the state needs as many, but a lot of the books we receive from the community are those people didn't like so they give them away. We hope to get books the kids will enjoy and have fun reading."

Bradley, with the help of his Boy Scout troop, visited schools in his area including elementary, junior highs and high schools. He also approached businesses and people in the community. Bradley put together a schedule so they could collect books weekly.

"I am overwhelmed by the response," Bradley said. "One girl donated 60 books alone."

"We thought if we got 200 books we would be doing good," Bradley's mother Eileen Stoker said. "The number just boggled us." Bradley's family donated 21 books and people in his church donated 170 more. Businesses donated 374 and members of the community donated 445.

Jake Allan was Bradley's right-hand man during the month-long collection process. He went to West Clinton and Clinton Elementary schools to ask for book donations. Students and teachers from those two schools donated 757 books. Syracuse and Sunset junior high schools donated 554 between them and Northridge and Clearfield High students donated 441. Books were collected daily to keep the boxes from overflowing.

Bradley and his mom came up with 14 categories, including goose bumps, scary, classics, adult, juvenile, science fiction and western.

Twenty-nine boxes containing almost 1,900 books went to Youth Corrections. Eight boxes will go to women's and children's centers or the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

Employee Survey...

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- Support staff better including improving morale, increasing pay, recognizing their efforts, more and better training
- Reduce workload
- Deal with employees who can't, don't or won't do their job and who don't care about the work we do or the people we serve
- Broaden the availability and diversity of our provider pool, especially clinical services, and keep workers informed of what resources are available
- More parental, family and client involvement and responsibility
- Focus on our successes
- Make policies and services more flexible so we can meet individual needs

You also said we need to do a better job of educating the public and the Legislature about what we do. We are trying. We talk to reporters, citizens and legislators constantly. We're seeing improvements because of it.

Thank you for taking time to reply and for your ideas.

Dr. Fran Morse...

Service Capacity Is Top Issue for Disabilities Director

By Carol Sisco

DHS Public Information

Service capacity is the number one issue facing Fran Morse, Director of the Division of Services for People With Disabilities since July 22.

“Our main problem is service capacity and how to increase it fast enough to serve more people from the waiting list,” Morse said. “We also need to make sure the services we have are high quality.”

The problems have existed for many years. So have factions that believe different services should take priority.

“It has bothered me that there are so many factions and they’ve never been able to collaborate easily,” she said. “We have a history of new best practices positioning themselves against existing programs. It’s happened with community programs versus institutions and with individual family models against both of those.

“The status quo is always the strongest enemy in anything you are doing,” she said. “It has been necessary to fight the status quo at every stage. I think that particular civil war can be brought to a halt.”

Going to lawmakers with a united front is far more effective, Morse believes.

“You often see that a strategy that was good and useful was carried on too long,” she cautioned. “We have bigger issues than that. We have to get services to people who need them.”

Rather than promoting one type of program as appropriate for everyone, Morse believes “we should be trying to make things work for providers and people receiving services in our system. We need to use a person-centered planning policy.”

She also speaks from personal experience.

“I come from a family where my eldest brother was seriously multiply handicapped. He never learned to walk and talk. We kept him home for 18 years with ‘natural supports,’ cousins, aunts and a babushka,” she explained. “We also have a family member with a mild handicap. When you have that



Dr. Fran Morse, new disabilities director

you want the most independent, self-determined life. When you have someone for whom the burden of care is a daily struggle, a life and death issue, you want to keep them clean and safe. I don’t mean severely disabled people cannot do more than has been expected in the past. But the family’s view of the situation is often radically different between the two extremes.

“We need to recognize the diversity within the community,” she said. “I would like to not have to fight over the money so we can get on with helping each person get what they need.”

Morse, formerly associate director for Client Support Services at Valley Mental Health, spent most of her career working with people who have disabilities or mental illness.

She also ran the Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, worked at Utah Health Department’s policy office and in the Department of Social Services (now Human Services). Earlier, she directed mental health programs for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Saipan.

Morse has a Ph.D. from the University of Utah in clinical and counseling psychology; a master’s degree in social psychology from the U. and a bachelor’s degree from Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia, in psychology.

Open for Business...

Remodeling Underway But New Division Functioning

By Carol Sisco

DHS Public Information

Major remodeling is still underway, but the newly combined Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health is open for business.

Randy Bachman, the former mental health director, took over the new Division Oct. 2. Bachman previously ran the Northwestern Counseling Center in the Uintah Basin and held human services management positions in the public and private non-profit sectors in Minnesota.

"I had substance abuse responsibilities as center director," Bachman said, "and I was social services division director for all adult and children's services in Minnesota."

Bachman was involved in organizing one of Utah's first drug courts in the Uintah Basin. He also worked with the CIAO program which provides ongoing treatment and aftercare for parolees.

"I'm familiar with many of the programs, the acronyms and the people," he said. "I'm familiar with some of the issues, but there is a lot going on in the field. I need to get up to speed with current issues."

The transition to one division, mandated by the Legislature, has been hard.

"I've really appreciated the staff's support and attitude. They want to make it all work," he said.

"People are doing their jobs and the board has been formed. I also appreciate Pat's (Fleming) collaboration during the transition. He was super to work with."

Fleming, the former substance abuse director, became Salt Lake County Substance Abuse Director Nov. 4.

While substance abuse and mental health have some distinct issues, they also have much in common.

"Both work with prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery," Bachman said. "Ultimately, we're dealing with people becoming as healthy and productive as they can be."

Bachman has four goals for the new division:

- Increase collaboration and coordination among different parts of the substance abuse and mental health systems and related agencies to "strengthen our influence, improve our public image, reduce stigma and maintain, improve and expand services to those with addiction or mental illness."
- Promote behavioral health, prevention and wellness throughout Utah.
- Provide effective and ethical treatment to those with addiction or mental illness.
- Support families whose loved ones are addicted or mentally ill and support families in promoting healthy life-styles.



Fall substance abuse conference was big success

Change Permeated Air at Fall Conference

By B.J. VanRoosendaal

Substance Abuse & Mental Health

Recall the oft-quoted saying "nothing is constant except change"? Nothing better describes the former Division of Substance Abuse and their Annual Fall Conference. Change permeated the air like haze on an autumn afternoon at the Oct. 2-4

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Fall Conference...

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conference of the newly combined Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

The Sept. 1 change resulted from a legislative special session. While change may not immediately be apparent to respective clients, patients and stakeholders, it will have an effect on both agencies. Everyone is learning details of this arrangement.

The 24th fall conference had other groundbreaking changes. The first day the Division of Child and Family Services came in for a joint presentation focusing on the interrelationship between substance abuse and child welfare. The theme was "Educating for Excellence—Working Together to Build Strong Partnerships."

Another highlight was a talk by Dr. H. Westley Clark, Director of the National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that has the primary goal of "improving and expanding treatment for people with alcohol and drug abuse or addiction problems." Dr. Clark brought conference participants the national perspective on the latest research and trends in the field and how Utah might be affected by these developments.

Dr. Nancy Young, a nationally-known expert from California, addressed participants on how child welfare and substance abuse professionals can work together. Most Human Services employees have a basic knowledge of the other systems they work with, but the additional in-depth information was very useful.

The conference was sponsored by the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Board, Utah Behavioral Healthcare Network, the State Office of Education and Utah Substance Abuse & the Anti-Violence Coordinating Council.

Doreen Smith...

A Sad Loss for ORS

**By Joyce Linder
Recovery Services**

We are sad to announce that Doreen May Dopp Smith, 45, passed away Sept. 12 of a sudden brain hemorrhage. Doreen worked at the Office of Recovery Services for 20 years.



She was the loving wife of Thayne; mother of Mistie, 19; Alicia, 14; and Alex, 13.

Doreen's sister-in-law Debbie Dopp, also an ORS employee, describes Doreen as someone she admired because she tackled whatever was asked of her even if it was out of her comfort zone. For example, she was asked to teach at her church, and although she hated getting up in front of people, she went all out in the presenting her lessons.

Doreen's children were her first priority, according to Debbie. She was a room mother every year for her kids and never missed a field trip. One of the things said in her eulogy was that she knew life was not fair but she went all out to be sure that she could make it fair for her kids. They loved her and she had a close relationship with them.

Doreen will be missed.

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